

# DIRECTIONS

CONCERNING

## Pronunciation

AND

## GESTURE.



ERISTOL:

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# DIRECTIONS

## CONCERNING

### Pronunciation *and* Gesture.

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#### SECT. I.

*How we may speak so as to be heard without Difficulty, and with Pleasure.*

1. **B**EFORE we enter upon Particular Rules, I would advise all who can, First, To study the ART of SPEAKING *betimes*, and to *practise* it as often as possible, before they have contracted any of the common Imperfections or Vices of Speaking. For these may easily be avoided at first, but when they are once learn'd, 'tis extreamly difficult to unlearn them. I advise all young Persons, 2. To be govern'd in Speaking as in all other Things by Reason rather than Example, and therefore to have an especial Care, whom they imitate therein: And to imitate only what is right in their Manner of Speaking, not their Blemishes and Imperfections.

2. The first Business of a Speaker is, So to speak, that he may be heard and understood with Ease. In order to this, it is a great Advantage to have a clear, strong Voice: Such at least, as will fill the Place where you speak, so as to be heard by every Person in it. To strengthen a weak Voice, read or speak something aloud, for at least half an Hour every Morning. But  
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take Care not to strain your Voice at first. Begin low and raise it by Degrees, to the Height.

3. If you are apt to falter in your Speech, read something in private daily, and pronounce every Word and Syllable so distinctly, that they may all have their Full Sound and Proportion. If you are apt to stammer at such and such particular Expressions, take particular Care, first, to pronounce them plainly. When you are once able to do this, you may learn to pronounce them more fluently at your Leisure.

The Chief Faults of Speaking are,

1. The Speaking too loud. This is disagreeable to the Hearers, as well as inconvenient for the Speaker. For they must impute it either to Ignorance or Affectation, which is never so inexcusable as in Preaching.

Every Man's Voice should indeed fill the Place where he speaks: But if it exceeds its natural Key, it will be neither sweet, nor soft, nor agreeable, were it only on this Account, That he cannot then give every Word its proper and distinguishing Sound.

2. The speaking too low. This is, of the two, more disagreeable than the former. Take Care therefore to keep between the Extremes: To preserve the Key, the Command of your Voice, and to adapt the Loudness of it, to the Place where you are, or the Number of Persons to whom you speak.

In order to this, consider whether your Voice be naturally loud or low: And if it incline to either Extreme, correct this first in your ordinary Conversation. If it be too low, converse with those that are deaf: if too loud, with those who speak softly.

3. The speaking in a thick cluttering Manner. Some Persons mumble, or swallow some Words or Syllables; and do not utter the rest articulately or distinctly. This is sometimes owing to a Natural Defect: Sometimes to a sudden Flatter of Spirits: But oftner to a bad Habit.

To cure this, accustom yourself both in Conversation and Reading, to pronounce every Word distinctly. Observe how full a Sound some give to every Word, and Labour to imitate them. If no other Way avail, do as *Demosthenes* did; who cured himself of this Natural

tural Defect, by repeating Orations every Day, with Pebbles in his Mouth.

4. The speaking too fast. This is a Common Fault; but not a little one. Particularly when we speak of the Things of God. It may be cured by habituating yourself, to attend to the Weight, Sense and Propriety of every Word you speak.

5. The speaking too slow, is not a Common Fault; and when we are once warn'd of it, it may be easily avoided.

6. The Speaking with an Irregular, Desultory and uneven Voice, rais'd or depress'd unnaturally or unseasonably. To cure this, you should take Care not to begin your Periods either too high or too low; for that would necessarily lead you to an unnatural and improper Variation of the Voice. And remember, never either to raise or sink your Voice, without a particular Reason; arising either from the Length of the Period, or the Sense or Spirit of what you speak.

7. But the greatest and most common Fault of all, is, the Speaking with a Tone. Some have a Womanish, squeaking Tone: Some a singing or canting one: Some an high, swelling, theatrical Tone, laying too much Emphasis on every Sentence: Some have an awful, solemn Tone; others an odd, whimsical, whining one, not to be express'd in Words.

To avoid all Kind of unnatural Tones, the only Rule is this, Endeavour to speak in Publick just as you do in Common Conversation. Attend to your Subject, and deliver it in the same Manner, as if you were talking of it to a Friend. This, if carefully observ'd, will correct both this and almost all the other Faults of a bad Pronunciation.

For a Good Pronunciation is nothing but a natural, easy and graceful Variation of the Voice, suitable to the Nature and Importance of the Sentiments we deliver.

8. If you wou'd be heard with Pleasure, in order to make the deeper Impression on your Hearers, 1. Study to render your Voice as soft and sweet as possible: And the more, if it be naturally harsh, hoarse or obstreperous; which may be cured by constant Exercise.



By carefully using this every Morning, you may in a short Time wear off these Defects, and contract such a smooth and tuneful Delivery, as will recommend whatever you speak.

9. Secondly, Labour to avoid the Odious Custom of Coughing and Spitting, while you are Speaking. And if at some Times you cannot wholly avoid it, yet take Care you do not stop in the Middle of a Sentence, but only at such Times as will least interrupt the Sense of what you are delivering.

10. Above all, take Care, Thirdly, to vary your Voice, according to the Matter on which you speak. Nothing more grates the Ear, than a Voice still in the same Key. And yet nothing is more common. Altho' this Monotony is not only unpleasant to the Ear, but destroys the Effect of what is spoken.

11. The best Way to learn how to vary the Voice, is, To observe Common Discourse. Take Notice How you speak yourself in ordinary Conversation, And how others speak on various Occasions. After the very same Manner you are to vary your Voice in Publick, allowing for the Largeness of the Place, and the Distance of the Hearers.

## S E C T. II.

### *General RULES for the Variation of the Voice*

1. The Voice may be varied three Ways, First, as to Height or Lowness, Secondly, as to Vehemence or Softness, Thirdly, As to Swiftness or Slowness.

And First, As to Height, a Medium between the Extremes is carefully to be observed. You must neither strain your Voice, by raising it always to the highest Note it can reach, nor sink it always to the lowest Note, which would be to murmur rather than to speak.

2. As to Vehemence, Have a Care how you force your Voice to the last Extremity. You cannot hold this long, without Danger of its cracking, and failing you on a Sudden. Nor yet ought you to speak in too faint and remiss a Manner, which destroys all the Force and Energy of what is spoken.

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3. As to Swiftness, You ought to moderate the Voice so as to avoid all Precipitation: Otherwise you give the Hearers no Time to think, and so are not likely either to convince or to persuade them. Yet neither should you speak slower than Men generally do, in common Conversation. 'Tis a Fault, to draw out your Words too slow, or to make needless Breaks and Pauses. Nay to drawl is (of the two) worse than to hurry. The Speech ought not to drop, but to flow along. But then it ought to flow like a gliding Stream, not as a rapid Torrent.

4. Yet let it be observed, that the Medium I recommend does not consist in an indivisible Point. It admits of a considerable Latitude. As to the Height or Lowness of the Voice, there are five or six Notes whereby it may be varied, between the Highest and the Lowest: So here is abundant Room for Variation, without falling into either Extreme. There is also sufficient Room between the Extremes of Violence and of Softness, to pronounce either more vehemently or more mildly, as different Subjects may require. And as to Swiftness or Slowness, tho' you avoid both Extremes, you may nevertheless speak faster or slower, and that in several Degrees, as best answers the Subject and Passions of your Discourse.

5. But it should likewise be observed, that the Voice ought not to be varied too hastily in any of these Respects: But the Difference is to be made by Degrees, and almost insensibly: Too sudden a Change being unnatural and affected, and consequently disagreeable to the Hearers.

### S E C T. III.

#### *Particular RULES for varying the Voice.*

1. If you speak of Natural Things, only to make the Hearers understand them, there needs only a clear and distinct Voice. But if you would display the Wisdom and Power of God therein, do it with a stronger and more Solemn Accent.

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2. The Good and Honourable Actions of Men should be described, with a full and lofty Accent: Wicked and infamous Actions, with a strong and earnest Voice, and such a Tone as expresses Horror and Detestation.

3. In congratulating the Happy Events of Life, we speak with a lively and chearful Accent: In relating Misfortunes (as in Funeral Orations) with a slow and mournful one.

4. The Voice should also be varied according to the Greatness or Importance of the Subject: It being absurd, either to speak in a lofty Manner, where the Subject is of little Concern: Or to speak of great and important Affairs, with a low, unconcern'd and familiar Voice.

5. On all Occasions let the Thing you are to speak be deeply imprinted on your own Heart: And when you are sensibly touch'd yourself, you will easily touch others, by adjusting your Voice to every Passion which you feel.

6. Love is shewn by a soft, smooth, and melting Voice: Hate by a sharp and sullen one: Joy by a full and flowing one: Grief by a dull, languishing Tone; some Times interrupted by a Sigh or Groan. Fear is express'd by a trembling and hesitating Voice: Boldness by speaking loud and strong. Anger is shewn by a sharp and impetuous Tone, taking the Breath often, and speaking short. Compassion requires a soft and submissive Voice.

7. After the Expression of any violent Passion, you should gradually lower your Voice again. Readiness in varying it on all Kinds of Subjects as well as Passions, is best acquired by frequently reading or repeating aloud, either Dialogues, Select Plays, or such Discourses as come nearest to the Dramatick Style.

8. You should begin a Discourse low, both as it expresses Modesty, and as it is best for your Voice and Strength: And yet so as to be heard by all that are present. You may afterwards rise as the Matter shall require. The Audience likewise, being calm and unmoved at first, are best suited by a cool and dispassionate Address.

9. Yet this Rule admits of some Exceptions. For on some Extraordinary Occasions, you may begin a Discourse abruptly and passionately, and consequently with a warm and passionate Accent.

10. You may speak a little louder, in laying down what you design to prove, and explaining it to your Hearers. But you need not speak with any Warmth or Emotion yet; 'tis enough, if you speak articulately and distinctly.

11. When you prove your Point, and refute your Adversary's Objections, there is Need of more Earnestness and Contention of Voice. And here chiefly it is, that you are to vary your Voice, according to the Rules above recited.

12. A little Pause may then precede the Conclusion; in which you may gradually rise to the utmost Strength of Pronunciation; and finish all with a lively, cheerful Voice, expressing Joy and Satisfaction.

13. An *Exclamation* requires a loud and strong Voice; And so does an *Oath* or strong *Affirmation*: As, "O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD!"—"I call GOD to record upon my Soul."

14. In a *Prosopœia*, the Voice should be varied according to the Character of the Persons introduced: In an *Apostrophe*, according to the Circumstances of the Person or Thing to which you address your Speech: Which if directed either to GOD, or to inanimate Things, ought to be louder than usual.

15. In reciting and answering Objections, the Voice should be varied, as if Two Persons were speaking. And so in Dialogues, or whenever several Persons are introduced, as disputing or talking together.

16. In a *Climax*, the Voice must be gradually raised, to answer every Step of the Figure. In an *Apophysis*, the Voice (which was raised to introduce it) must be lower'd considerably. In an *Antithesis*, the Points are to be distinguish'd, and the former to be pronounced with a stronger Tone than the latter: But in an *Anadiplosis* the Word repeated is pronounced the second Time louder and stronger than the first.

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17. Take Care never to make a Pause in speaking, in the Middle of a Word or Sentence: But only where there is such a Pause in the Sense as requires, or at least, allows of it. You may make a short Pause after every Period: And begin the next, generally a little lower than you concluded the last: But on some Occasions a little higher; which the Nature of the Subject will easily determine.

18. I wou'd likewise advise every Speaker to observe those who speak well, that he may not pronounce any Word in an improper Manner. And in Case of Doubt, let him not be ashamed to ask, How such a Word is to be pronounced: As neither to desire others that they wou'd inform him whenever they hear him pronounce any Word improperly.

19. Lastly, Take Care not to sink your Voice too much, at the Conclusion of a Period: But pronounce the very last Words loud and distinct, especially if they have but a weak and dull Sound of themselves.

## S E C T. VI.

### *Of G E S T U R E.*

1. That this silent Language of your Face and Hands may move the Affections of those that see and hear you, it must be well adjusted to the Subject, as well as to the Passion which you desire either to express or excite. It must likewise be free from all Affectation, and such as appears to be the mere natural Result, both of the Things you speak, and of the Affection that moves you to speak them. And the whole is so to be managed, that there may be nothing in all the Dispositions and Motions of your Body, to offend the Eyes of the Spectators.

2. But 'tis more difficult to find out the Faults of your own Gesture, than those of your Pronunciation. For a Man may hear his own Voice, but he cannot see his own Face: Neither can he observe the several Motions of his own Body; at least, but imperfectly. To remedy this, you may use a large Looking-glass,  
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as *Demosthenes* did, and thereby observe and learn to avoid every disagreeable or unhandsome Gesture.

3. There is but one Way better than this: Which is to have some Excellent Pattern as often as may be, before your Eyes: And to desire some skilful and faithful Friend to observe all your Motions, and inform you which are proper, and which are not.

4. As to the Motion of the Body, it ought not to change its Place or Posture every Moment. Neither on the other Hand, to stand like a Stock, in one fixt and immoveable Posture: But to move, in a natural and graceful Manner, as various Circumstances may require.

5. The Head ought not to be held up too high, nor clownishly thrust forward: Neither to be cast down and hang, as it were, on the Breast; Nor to lean always on one or the other Side: But to be kept Modestly and Decently upright, in its natural State and Position. Farther, it ought neither to be kept immoveable, as a Statue; nor to be continually moving and throwing itself about. To avoid both Extremes, it should be turn'd gently, as Occasion is, sometimes one Way, sometimes the other: And at other Times remain, looking strait forward, to the Middle of the Auditory. Add to this, that it ought always to be turn'd, on the same Side with the Hands and Body: Only in refusing a Thing; for this we do with the right Hand, turning the Head at the same Time to the Left.

6. But 'tis the Face which gives the greatest Life to Action: Of this therefore you must take the greatest Care, that nothing may appear disagreeable in it, since 'tis continually in the View of all but Yourself. And there is nothing can prevent this, but the Looking-glass, or a Friend, who will deal faithfully with you. You should adapt all its Movements to the Subject you treat of, the Passions you would raise, and the Persons to whom you speak. Let Love or Joy spread a Cheerfulness over your Face; Hatred, Sorrow, or Fear a Gloominess. Look with Gravity and Authority on your Inferiors, on your Superiors with Boldness mixt with Respect.

7. You should always be casting your Eyes upon some or other of your Auditors, and moving them from one Side to the other, with an Air of Affection and Regard: Looking them decently in the Face, one after another, as we do in familiar Conversation. Your Aspect should always be pleasant, and your Looks direct, neither severe nor askew: Unless you design to express Contempt or Scorn, which may require that particular Aspect.

8. If you speak of Heaven or Things above, lift up your Eyes: If of Things beneath, cast them down: And so if you speak of Things of Disgrace; but raise them, in Swearing, or speaking of Things wherein you glory.

9. The Mouth must never be turn'd awry: Neither must you bite or lick your Lips, or shrug up your Shoulders; or lean upon your Elbow; all which give just Offence to the Spectators.

10. We make use of the Hands a thousand different Ways; only very little at the Beginning of a Discourse. Concerning this, you may observe the Rules following:

1. Never clap your Hands, nor thump the Pulpit: 2. Use the Right Hand most, and when you use the Left, let it be only to accompany the other: 3. The Right-Hand may be gently applied to the Breast, when you speak of your own Faculties, Heart or Conscience: 4. You must begin your Action with your Speech, and end it when you make an End of Speaking: 5. The Hands should seldom be lifted up higher than the Eyes, nor let down lower than the Breast: 6. Your Eyes should always have your Hands in View, so that they you speak to may see your Eyes, your Mouth and your Hands, all moving in Concert with each other, and expressing the same Thing: 7. Seldom stretch out your Arms side-ways, more than half a Foot from the Trunk of your Body: 8. Your Hands are not to be in perpetual Motion: This the Antients call'd, The Babbling of the Hands.

11. There are many other Things relating to Action as well as Utterance, which can't easily be express'd in Writing. These you must learn by Practice; by hearing a Good Speaker, and speaking often before him.

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12. But remember, while you are actually Speaking, you must not be studying any other Motions, but use those that naturally arise from the Subject of your Discourse, from the Place where you speak, and the Characters of the Persons whom you address.

13. I would advise you, lastly, to observe, these Rules as far as Things permit, even in your Common Conversation; 'till you have got a perfect Habit of observing them, so that they are, as it were, natural to you. And whenever you hear an eminent Speaker, observe with the utmost Attention, What Conformity there is between his Action and Utterance, and these Rules. You may afterwards imitate him at Home, 'till you have made his Graces your own. And when once by such Assistance as these, you have acquired a good Habit of Speaking, you will no more need any tedious Reflections upon this Art, but will speak as easily as gracefully.

*F I N I S.*





